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ABSTRACT

This document proposes a new meaning for the term postsecondary education: (adult learning through an accredited or eligible institution). Following a preliminary definition, this paper suggests some related issues in the milieu of higher education, then explores several of the abstract arguments for a new meaning. Aspects of the Education Amendments of 1972 which give weight of public law and financing to the new concept are described. Of great importance to traditional higher education is the range of new enterprises (and competitors) that postsecondary education embraces. The scope of educational activity for adults outside colleges and universities is described through references to the extent of adult educational interest, and role and extent of proprietary, military, government, business and labor education. A bibliography is included. (Author/MJM)

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POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION: THE NEW MEANING

by David A. Trivett

Postsecondary education has an old usage as a term classifying education less than the baccalaureate occuring after grade twelve. It is acquiring a new meaning. Following a preliminary definition, this paper suggests some related issues in the milieu of higher education, then explores several of the abstract arguments for a new meaning. Aspects of the Education Amendments of 1972 which give weight of public law and financing to the new concept are described. Of great importance to traditional higher education is the range of new enterprises (and competitors) that postsecondary education embraces. The scope of educational activity for adults outside colleges and universities is described through references to the extent of adult educational interest, and role and extent of proprietary, military, government, business and labor education.

TENTATIVE DEFINITION

Some notion of the scope of postsecondary education can be had by considering the working definition recommended to the National Commission on the Financing of Postsecondary Education by its Committee on Conditions, Definitions and Expectations:

> Postsecondary education consists of formal instruction, research, public service, and other learning opportunities offered by education institutions that primarily serve persons who have completed secondary education or who are beyond the compulsory school attendance age and that are accredited by agencies officially recognized for that purpose by the U.S. Office of Education or are otherwise eligible to participate in federal programs. (National Commission on the Financing of Postsecondary Education, p. 19).

Virtually every type of learning activity is covered by the definition and the only restriction on students is that they be over the age of compulsory schooling. Institutional eligibility is inclusive rather than exclusive.

INTO THE MILIEU OF HIGHER EDUCATION

According to Lyman Glenny, certain trends put traditional higher education into competition with those institutions in postsecondary education (as defined above). The age of expansion for higher education is over; the birthrate is at its lowest point ever. Competition for students will be fierce, especially since the proportion of state budgets going to higher education will not increase. Higher education is falling as a social priority while the expectation is rising that a student should pay for more of his education than he has in the past. If he pays more, he is likely to demand more pay-off from his investment. "Perhaps the most important of the major trends largely ignored is the increasing tendency for those who want training in a great variety of skills and in career education to attend the proprietary and industrial schools rather than the traditional college and university — including the community college (Glenny, pp. 8-9)." He sees a correlation between enrollment slowdown and institutional emphasis on the liberal arts. A future opportunity lies in supplying vocational skills to young people who simply seek jobs, especially if a college degree becomes less important itself as certificate and competency certification becomes more important (Glenny, pp. 3-18).

A weakening relation between the college degree and job surety is an element of the new milieu. The Carnegie Commission reports that the three-century-old preference in the job market for college graduates is being threatened (Carnegie Commission 1973a, p. vii). The extent to which college graduates are unable to find suitable employment is difficult to determine. However, a *Business Week* article argues that the situation is no longer temporary. Quoting an unspecified federal task force, the article asserts that by 1977 there will be surpluses in every recognized profession, that by 1980 1.5 million college graduates may have to accept employment at lower levels than they expect ("The Job Gap for College Graduates in the 70's", pp. 48, 50). Answers suggested in the article stress vocational retraining.

While a change in the products offered by higher education has been called for, emphasis is also growing on statewide coordination of all efforts in postsecondary education. For example, the Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Commission, recognizing the revolutionary implication of no-growth to traditional higher education, has called for inclu-

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sion of private institutions in planning efforts and reflection on institutional objectives with an eye toward the retraining market and the provision of more educational services for adults (pp. xiv, xvii).

LIFELONG EDUCATION AND OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

A broader meaning of postsecondary education also follows from numerous abstract formulations and recommendations on education now being disseminated. International organizations and opinion are turning to structural reforms and new types of institutions. This change is based on the belief that institutions must be more diverse, and ties and flows of students, teachers, and financial resources among institutions must be encouraged (Furth 1973, pp. 95, 101). The gap between developing and industrial nations is widening; the demand for education is growing; practical limits have been reached on the amount of resources put into traditional educational efforts that are hierarchically arranged from elementary through higher education (International Commission on the Development of Education, pp. 48-49).

One solution to the resource gap problem is *lifelong education*. The impact of lifelong education is suggested in the following Carnegie Commission prediction:

> . . . we anticipate a new type of development as perhaps the predominant characteristic of the last three decades of the present century — a movement away from participation in formal institutional higher education in the years immediately following high school toward a more free-flowing pattern of participation spread over a broader span of years, perhaps well into middle age and beyond. Students will be encouraged to gain some work experience for several years after high school or after one or two years of college and return to college later, perhaps on a part-time basis . . . (Carnegie Commission 1971b, p. 39).

In *Learning to Be*, the International Commission assumed lifelong education was necessary and argued that humans need to learn how to acquire knowledge not once in their life but continually (International Commission on the Development of Education, p. vi). Similar recommendations are made in Alberta (Alberta. Cabinet Committee on Education, p. 37), in Ontario (Ontario. Commission on Post-Secondary Education, p. 21), and by the Commission on Non-traditional Study (p. xviii).

Lifelong education extends learning beyond the customary age range. This is a recognition that the ladder approach to knowledge, with the top rung reached at young adulthood, is no ionger appropriate. Instead, we see that the education of an individual occurs over his lifetime; formal instruction ought to be available throughout life (Commission on Non-Traditional Study, p. 47). Besides, the knowledge explosion and information obsolescence reduce the value of both initial knowledge acquired and career experience (Alberta. Cabinet Commission, p. 109). Interrupted study, previously viewed as failure, can now be seen as a phase in a lifetime learning process, a phase which should be met by modification in institutional structure (Commission on Non-Traditional Study, p. 41).

The nature of the relationship between learner and institution may well be in for change. In what he sees as "the fundamental issue in determining the future of education," Michael Marien poses the following question:

> Is education to be organized around institutions, credit, and credentials (any person and any study in acceptable situations), or is education to be organized around learners as an optimal system for distributing knowledge and encouraging its utilization (any person, any study, any time, any place, any method — and for any purpose of the learner)? (Marien, p. 11).

The other side of the coin is that a variety of educational institutions are needed to provide varied educational experiences in lifelong education. Frank Newman framed some questions that point the way:

> What is the value of education in the classroom, as contrasted to education on the job, or education by an external experience such as the Peace Corps? Why is it that we only consider education to go on in the nonprofit, accredited institutions? What is so second-rate about an education because it takes place in the armed forces, in proprietary institutions, or in many businesses? (Newman, p. 30).

The Carnegie Commission recommends "that the expansion of postsecondary educational opportunities be encouraged outside the formal college in apprenticeship programs, proprietary schools, in-service training in industry, and in military programs. . . (Carnegie Commission 1971a, p. 13). Although these alternative opportunities compete for students, they potentially add strength by performing specific services that traditional institutions are not prepared to provide (Commission on Non-Traditional Study, p. xvii).

THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972

The Ninety-second Congress and the Educational Amendments of 1972 gave legal and monetary force to the concept of postsecondary education. Seeking diversity, access, and real choice for students,Congress funded programs across all postsecondary education and extended financing directly to students thereby encouraging consumer choice (Dellenback).

Student Assistance Provisions. In a revision of Title IV (Educational Opportunity Grants) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, the 1972 Amendment (Grants to Students in Attendance at Institutions of Higher Education) proposes "to assist in making available the benefits of postsecondary education to qualified students in institutions of higher education. . ." (U.S. Congress, p. 14).

The assistance provision stipulates that grants such as the Basic Opportunity Grants are available directly to students on the basis of need rather than scholarship or institutional choice. And the student determines where his money is to be spent (Marland).

Special Programs for Students From Disadvantaged Backgrounds. Designed to create a program to identify qualified students from low-income families, prepare them for a program of postsecondary education and provide special (remedial) services for such students, this provision recognizes proprietary institutions as eligible contractors (U.S. Congress, p. 26).

The *study of the financing of postsecondary education* (U.S. Congress, pp. 49-50). The National Commission on the Financing of Postsecondary Education resulted from this provision; it may propose legislation to fit its definition.

1202 Commissions. In order for states to benefit from the Community Colleges and Occupational Education Amendment title, the states are required to "establish a State Commission or designate an existing State agency or State Commission . . . which is broadly and equitably representative of the general public *and public and private nonprofit and proprietary institutions of postsecondary education in the State* [emphasis added] . . ." (U.S. Congress, p. 93). States are also required to conduct inventories and planning studies that broadly extend opportunity for postsecondary education throughout each state.

Through the purse strings, Congress has encouraged the States to increase access to students and embrace more types of institutions in planning. Potential future changes in financing can be anticipated from the work of the Commission on Financing. Money, recognition, and equality have been extended to all institutions, regardless of their rank in the traditional pecking order. The student has been given more choice over how his tax money will be spent for his postsecondary education, thereby permitting consumer choice to guide the future development of postsecondary education.

THE "LEARNING FORCE"

Idealistic, legislative, and survival reasons dictate an awareness on the part of higher education to the students and institutions now included in postsecondary education.

Using an extensive survey, Tough found that nearly every adult undertakes a major learning project each year, with some individuals undertaking 15 or 20. A median of eight projects were undertaken, with a project defined as "a major, highly deliberate effort to gain certain knowledge and skill (or to change in some other way)" (Tough, p. 1). He found it common for adults to spend 700 hours a year at learning projects. Adult interest in vocational subjects, hobbies, and recreation (matter other than general education) is revealed in a survey of educational interests of a representative sample of American adults conducted for the Commission on Non-Traditional Study (pp. 16-21).

Moses argues that by concentrating on the "core" (the traditional ladder from kindergarten to graduate school) we have ignored the "periphery" (vocationally oriented learning activities engaged in by millions in business, as well as government, military, proprietary, cultural, television, correspondence programs). He further argues that for some 60 million adults in 1970 the most important learning activities occurred in the periphery. The "Learning Force" represents the combined core and periphery learners (Moses, *passim*) and would seem to represent the potential student population for postsecondary education.

THE OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Besides the traditional colleges and universities, who are the neighbors in postsecondary education? The first Office of Education directory of public and private schools offering occupational education at the postsecondary level lists only those schools that are accredited or otherwise eligible for Federal programs and that offer courses leading to specific occupational objectives. The number of institutions listed in the directory, those meeting the criteria, is *8,182* (Kay, p. xix). However, the total number of institutions offering postsecondary vocational programs (whether or not accredited or eligible for Federal programs) is 11,731 (unpublished data from National Center for Educational Statistics, 1973).

One type—private vocational schools—are generally profit-seeking organizations that offer courses usually of less than two years in length directed toward the requirements for a job (Belitsky, pp. 1-3). A recent article describing the operation of the DeVry Institute of Technology suggested that the institute took in $60 million in tuition with 70,000 correspondence students and 6,600 resident students at the institute's branches (Van Dyne, p. 7). Katz found that the private schools represented in his study can survive because they are totally job oriented, are basically educational branches of the business world, can respond quickly to changing needs (with specialized courses and expertise), and regard their courses as products (Katz, pp. 30-31, 37).

The number and variety of institutions is staggering. For example, the Association of Independent Colleges and Schools lists nearly 500 accredited members in its directory of business-related schools and independent colleges (Association of Independent Colleges and Schools). The National Home Study Council lists 188 accredited institutions in its directory and includes a "partial" listing of 271 courses ranging from "accident prevention" to beginning zookeeping (National Home Study Council 1973).

Noncollegiate institutional education comprises another component of postsecondary education. An example is military education. Rose suggests that educational benefits will be an important attraction to the all volunteer force. He sees the military using educational benefits to create an environment to "select in" desirable individuals and prepare those who leave for productive reentry into civilian life. More than one-half million individuals in uniform began work on some form of postsecondary education in 1972 (Rose).

The Federal Government utilizes "training and development" to keep millions of civil servants on their toes. For example, special training programs were employed to introduce automatic data processing when trained people were scarce (Hampton 1970). In fiscal year 1971 there were 967,619 "participations" (instances of formal classroom training of more than 8 hours) which absorbed 1.11 percent of Federal employee working time, excluding the Post Office (U.S. Civil Service Commission 1972).

The educational effort directed toward business employees is also mammoth. One indirect measure is the membership of the American Society for Training and Development. Of 5,297 members surveyed in spring 1973, 475 had training budgets of over $500,000 (American Society for Training and Development). Labor unions also are involved in special education efforts for their membership. The AFL-CIO is creating a Labor Studies Center in Washington to develop union leadership through such courses as "Group Processes and Communication in Unions." College credit will be an option. The study center joins the union effort represented by the more than 100 summer institutes (AFL-CIO, 1973a,b).

SUMMARY

The National Commission on Financing of Postsecondary Education proposes that *postsecondary education* means adult learning through an accredited or eligible institution. Higher education faces demographic and social trends which put it in competition with the balance of postsecondary education. Interrelated recommendations point to *lifelong*

education as the future pattern that will encourage individuals to learn throughout their life, rather than only at the beginning. Other reforms would mean a shift in learner-institution relationships. The Education Amendments of 1972 recognize the principle of student (consumer) choice through a wide range of institutions and encourage the states to support all postsecondary education. Anticipated clientele for postsecondary education includes adults shown to be interested in learning a range of subjects and skills. Many learning institutions and activities for adults exist on the "periphery" and are poorly studied. Examples include private vocational schools, the military, the Federal Government, business, and labor. *Postsecondary education* has a new meaning and scope, dwarfing higher education.

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